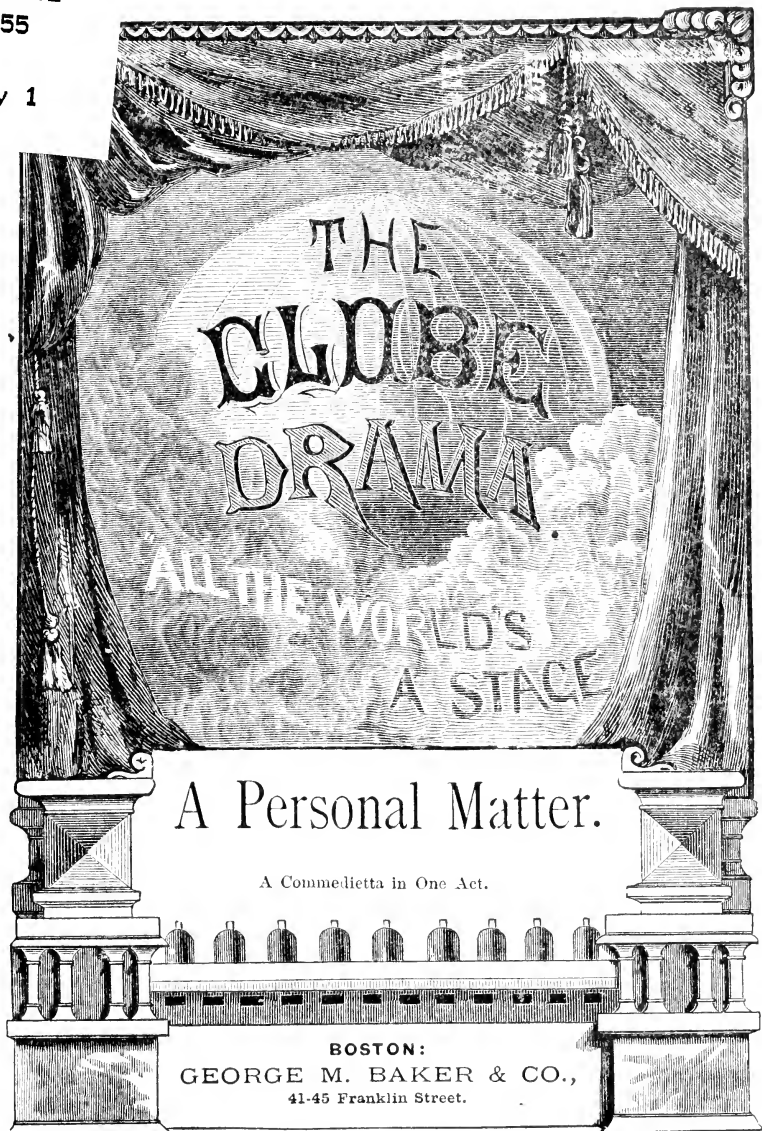


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By F. E. CHASE.



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A PERSONAL MATTER.

MR. CADWALLADER TAPSCOTT.

MRS. CYNTHIA TAPSCOTT.

SUSAN.

MR. COPYWRIGHT, editor of "The Milky Way."

SCENE. — *A breakfast-room, closed in. Double doors in flat, backed by interior; fireplace L.; entrances R. and L.; window R.; breakfast-table set with two chairs R. of C.; arm-chair by fireplace; desk R. of D. in F.*

MR. T. (*discovered standing back to fireplace*). I wonder where the deuce those morning papers are! I never, somehow, get up especially early in the morning to get them, but that particular morning they are sure to be unusually late. I sometimes suspect the carrier of cherishing a tender regard for the housemaid in No. 23: even now he may be urging his suit in the lower porch. By Jove! it is cool of him, — devilish cool! (*Hastily leaving fire, and examining coat-tails.*) Gad! how hot that fire is! Upon my soul, I thought at first I was ablaze! (*Looking at watch.*) Eight o'clock, and no paper yet! I wonder if it is beneath my dignity as a family man to punch that carrier's head. I don't know that that would mend matters much, but I feel that I should derive the most exquisite satisfaction from the operation. (*To easy-chair, taking paper.*) Here's that last night's paper again, continually obtruding itself upon me, and apparently glorying in its successor's delinquency. (*Sits.*) Hallo! what's this? I would have guaranteed my ability to reproduce this entire sheet with photographic accuracy, and yet here is actually a paragraph which has

escaped me. (*Reads.*) "Whereas my wife, Mrs. Sloper Sachett, has left my bed and board"—m—m. Pah! how disgusting are these quarrels between man and wife! I confess my own wife is not perfect; but, during the five years of our married life, I have warded off all unpleasantness by my imperturbable patience and self-control (*rising*). (*Loud.*) D—n it all! where is that paper? (*Bell outside.*) Ah! the carrier, at last. The housemaid in No. 23 has either accepted or rejected him; I hope the latter. (*Goes R.*)

SUSAN (*entering I E. R. with paper*). 'Ere's your paper, sir; and the carrier says as 'ow No. 28 has given him a dollar, and Mrs. Peevey, in the corner 'ouse, two; and, being as tomorrer's Christmas, and he's always taken pertickler pains to please you, he 'opes—

MR. T. (*snatching paper*). Hopes, does he? Oh, this is too much! this is adding insult to injury. First he steals my time, and then has the impudence to signify that he'd like to do as much for my money. Tell him I've nothing for him. (*Goes L.*)

SUSAN. But he's quite put himself out of his way, sir, to—

MR. T. Then ask him, as a further favor, to put himself out of *my* way as soon as possible,—d'y'e hear? (*SUSAN exit D. in F.*) (*Going C., and looking in paper.*) Now for the answer to my application. The dream of my life—and my wife's—has been to own a "cottage by the sea." A little while ago, a place I've had my eye on for months was offered for sale at the mere price of the land, dirt-cheap, in fact. (*R.*) I wanted it myself: it was a good investment, and so I negotiated for it. So much will a really good husband do to please his wife. The owner was to let me know to-day. Not by letter,—oh, no! my wife might get hold of that,—but by Personal in the paper; for all this is to be kept from her knowledge until the anniversary of our wedding. (*L.*) A surprise for her, and bought for a song, too, as the owner said; though I told her it was right enough a "cottage by the sea" should be sold for a song. (*Sits L., arm-chair.*) Let's see,—Personals,—third page—ah, here they are! (*Reads.*)

MRS. T. (*enters D. in F.*). (*Aside.*) Ah, here he is! Oh, dear! I wish I didn't feel so like a felon every time I see him. Indeed, I feel a *whit-low-er* than a felon, as Caddy

would say, at the sight of his dear, honest face. If the possession of a secret so harmless as mine makes a person feel so unpleasantly, how awfully those dreadful people that I read of in the papers must feel, with their bigamies and what not! (c.) Why, I hardly dare speak to him, for when he looks at me I know I shall look guilty. If I can only keep it from him till the anniversary of our wedding — but there! the dear honest fellow would no more suspect me of any duplicity, than he could be guilty of it himself. (L., *softly looking over T.'s shoulder.*) What can he find so interesting? (*Kisses him.*) Good-morning, Caddy.

MR. T. (*hastily rising, to c.*). Good-morning, my dear (*nervously*). Just down?

MRS. T. Oh, no! I've been here some time, but you were so engrossed in the paper that —

MR. T. I — I dare say I may have been talking to myself just now, eh? Perhaps you heard me talking to myself or — or — something.

MRS. T. No, dear: why?

MR. T. Oh, nothing! Only sometimes a personal — I mean person, does, you know. You do know, don't you? Hang it, Cynthia! what are you staring at? If I were really that useful but humble receptacle of tea, with whose name you are so fond of endowing me, I couldn't be insensible to the fact that your looks and manner toward me are extremely pointed. (*Raising voice.*) And I ask you calmly (*loud*), Do you see any thing peculiar about me?

MRS. T. (*going to him*). Why, Caddy, what is the matter? I wasn't conscious of staring. Come, kiss me good-morning.

MR. T. (*kissing her*). There, there! (*Both sit at table.*) I hated to mention it, Cynthia, you know, but you were staring at me very person — I mean particularly. And of course a person — I mean — yes, person — (*Loud.*) Hang it! I don't like it. (*Reads.*)

(SUSAN brings in, D. in F., coffee-urn and letter.)

MRS. T. (*aside*). I wonder what makes Caddy so irritable this morning. Can he suspect any thing? (*Pouring coffee.*) (*Aloud.*) And who was that strange-looking man I saw you with yesterday? some one in the real-estate line, I'll be bound, for he carried samples enough of that commodity about his person. (*Passes cup.*)

MR. T. (*suspending eating*). (*Aside.*) Real-estate look!

I've always observed that if you have any thing on your mind, people delight in stirring you up, so to speak, and treading on your moral corns. (*Aloud.*) Cynthia, as a particular favor, I beg you don't be absurd. That man is a millionaire. He's as rich as —

MRS. T. As mud, you were going to say. But it really isn't fair to throw cold water on my joke. I only said he was dirty. (*Eats.*)

MR. T. He has his faults certainly, but they are all merely superficial.

MRS. T. And the more inexcusable on that account, since soap and water would remove the most evident of them in no time.

MR. T. And I particularly respect him as being a typical self-made man.

MRS. T. Self-made men. Ah, yes! I know them. The children of luck, who invariably disown their father; men, who, making 'prentice work of themselves, so far improve their skill in their children, that the latter feel their superiority, and despise their progenitors; men who invariably claim to have risen from the gutter, — a boast, which, judging from appearances, is generally perfectly justified. In this case it is quite superfluous, indeed, since his origin was plainly written in his face. Bah! *canaille!*

MR. T. (*mispronouncing*). Canal, indeed!

MRS. T. Don't try French, Caddy. Don't adorn that much-abused word with an L like the highly-desirable cottage of the advertising-columns. (MR. T. *winces*.) That reminds me. Let me see the paper while you finish your breakfast.

MR. T. The paper; ah, yes! (*Aside.*) There she goes again. First, real estate, then hints at cottages, and now an absurd and wholly unprecedented desire for the newspaper. But no hesitation: the man who hesitates is lost, though in my case he is rather more likely to be found — out. (*Aloud, giving paper.*) There is an article on personals — Personalities in Journalism, that I know you'll like. It's on the —

MRS. T. (*turning paper*). On the third page. It's that you were reading when I came in. It must have been very interesting, judging from your — Why, Caddy, there is nothing here but advertisements. (*During above MR. T. betrays some agitation.*)

MR. T. (*groans*). Is this fate? (*Aloud.*) It's not there,

— no (*rising*). That reminds me: there is such a nice murder on the first page. (*Round to her.*) Let me show you. (*Tries to get paper.*) A babe in arms murders his wife and husband with a clothes-wringer, and completes his atrocious work by sawing off his head with a violin-bow. A *violent* death, the reporter calls it. Pretty good, ain't it? (*Grabs at paper.*) Yes; headed "A Scene of Horror." I assure —

MRS. T. (*rising*). For pity's sake, Mr. Tapscott, what does ail you?

MR. T. (*bracing up*). Nothing; I —

MRS. T. You seem to have lost your head as completely as the subject of your very disjointed remarks. One would think, from your manner, that you had a personal —

MR. T. (*alarmed*). Eh? oh! I say —

MRS. T. A personal interest in the affair.

MR. T. (*aside*). I breathe again. (*Aloud.*) Not at all, not at all. I — I only displayed the natural interest one feels in such —

MRS. T. Natural interest? What kind of principle can a man have who can derive interest from such sources? (*Goes L. to fire.*) But, Caddy, how about the babe in arms (L.), — a parricide at eighteen months? The infant Hercules is eclipsed. (*Laughs.*)

MR. T. (*down R., nervously*). Ha, ha! yes; very good.

MRS. T. You reverse Holy Writ most originally, and visit the sin of the child on the father in a very striking (*laughs*) manner. (*Looks at paper.*)

MR. T. (*aside, coming C.*). Confound it! she's at that paper again; she's turning to that infernal third page. I can't stand this any longer. I must get it away from her.

MRS. T. How absurd these personal advertisements are, Caddy! (*Bus., MR. T.*) Do you ever read — (*MR. T. makes a rush.*) Why, what — (*Dodging to C.*)

MR. T. (L.). Oh! I say, you mustn't — you know —

MRS. T. Mr. Tapscott, I am astonished at you. If it weren't for implying that you ever possessed such a thing, I should say you had lost your senses.

MR. T. (*aside*). I cannot stand this. (*Aloud.*) Mrs. T., I ask you in the mildest manner possible (*loud*) to give me that paper.

MRS. T. And I refuse to do any thing of the sort. (*Goes down R.*)

MR. T. (*loud*). Don't make me lose my temper, ma'am.
(*To C.*)

MRS. T. Oh! you never lose your temper; for you can't call a thing lost when you see it fifty times a day.

MR. T. As your husband, ma'am, I demand that paper.
(*A little down R.*)

MRS. T. The supply not being likely to equal your demand, the price will rise accordingly. Before you get this paper, you must make me a confession.

MR. T. (*retreating*). A — a confession?

MRS. T. A confession. You are deceiving me, sir. You have a secret, and the key to it is in this paper.

MR. T. No, no: you don't know — I —

MRS. T. You are right. I don't know; but I am in a fair way to find out. (*Goes L., to fire.*)

MR. T. My dear, I —

MRS. T. I assure you, I'm not at all dear. In return for this paper, my price is simply an explanation of your strange behavior. And remember, sir, that I give you this opportunity out of kindness; for I can easily find out for myself.
(*Shows paper.*)

MR. T. (*down R., aside*). Pooh! she'd never find out any thing from the item. I must be bold. (*Aloud, tragically.*) You wrong me, Cynthia; but I forgive you.

MRS. T. (*imitating*). "I love thee, Cassio: but never more be officer of mine." Bah! don't try blank verse, Mr. Tapscott. You will find it quite hard enough to explain matters in prose.

MR. T. (*continuing*). But I forgive you. Standing as I do on a pinnacle —

MRS. T. At length you have come to the point; though, judging from your recent behavior, "ragged edge" were more to the purpose.

MR. T. — a pinnacle of moral rectitude which no mere suspicion can undermine, I —

SUSAN (*entering D. in F.*). Av ye please, 'ere's a person below as wants to see —

MR. and MRS. T. (*together*). Me?

SUSAN. Yes, please.

MRS. T. (*aside, putting paper on mantle*). Can it be Copywright?

MR. T. (*up C.*). Any name?

SUSAN. He didn't give no name, sir; but he said as how he come about that — (MR. T. *stops her mouth.* MRS. T. *signals violently for her to be silent.*)

SUSAN (*bewildered*). He said the lady — (*Bus. by both frantically repeated.*)

MRS. T. (*aside*). This girl will ruin all. How stupid of Copywright to send a message by her! (*Goes R. to window and looks out.*)

MR. T. (*aside*). If my wife were to hear of the widow, I should be in a worse box than I am now. (*Low to SUSAN.*) For heaven's sake, not a word more! Tell him to wait at the corner. Go, there's a good girl. (*Exit SUSAN, D. in F.*) (*Aloud.*) A — a friend on business. Mrs. T., I must be off; and I hope, Cynthia, you will have forgotten your absurd distrust of me before I see you again. We'll see what a few presents will do.

MRS. T. Your absence is far more acceptable to me than your presents can possibly hope to be.

MR. T. Ah, Cynthia! (*Aside.*) She'll get over it. Wanted me to sell my secret, did she? Well, that were better, from a commercial point of view, than to give it away, as I came very near doing. (*Aloud.*) Ta, ta. (*Exit D. in F.*)

MRS. T. (*at window R.*). It was Copywright. There he goes down the street. What could he be thinking of, to come so early? I declare, he's waiting on the corner. What an idiot! (*Retreating.*) He actually had the impudence to blow a kiss to me. (*Peeping.*) There, — there goes Caddy after him. What if he saw him do it? They pass each other without any recognition. Yes — why, Caddy is waiting on the corner, and looking about as if he expected to see some one. (*Retreating.*) Come to think of it, he did expect to see some one. Thought Copywright was a friend of his. (*Peeping.*) Why, he isn't going down town: he's taking a Chilbury Ferry horse-car. That's suspicious. (*Down c.*) And how frantically he endeavored to suppress his supposed friend's business when Susan — Yes; and, when Susan began about the lady, I saw him glance at me, and stop her. O Caddy, Caddy, this is far worse than I thought! Ah me! But the paper, — he has left it. Yes, here it is. (*Goes L. to mantle, and takes it.*) I have a clew here. He was reading on the third page. (*Opens paper.*) But what? (*Searches.*) Why, there is nothing here but advertisements

and the Personals. Personals, — he can't have any interest in them; and yet, now I remember, every time I spoke that unfortunate word, or looked on this innocent third page, he acted in that suspicious way. Let me see. (*Reads.*) "Will the young lady who rode the bicycle" — No, no; it's not that. (*Reads.*) "If the red-haired young man with the insinuating address" — No, nor that. Ah! (*Reads.*) "C. T. — I cannot resist your last offer. Inclination and interest both point the same way. Lobelia is yours on your own terms. Meet me to-day at ten, to make the final arrangements. — T." (*Drops paper, and sits by fire, sobbing.*) Oh, oh, to think I could have been so blind! It must be he. If it were only "C.," there might be some mistake; but "C. T." can mean nothing but Caddy Tapscott. And he has made her an offer, too, — the brute! (*Sobs.*) Oh, oh, I never would have believed he could be so bad as that! Her interest and inclination both point — Her interest first, no doubt, — the mercenary wretch! And such a name, — Lobelia! it is enough to nauseate one. I know she's horrid. (*Sobs.*) Oh, oh, this is cruel of him! This is where he has gone in such a hurry. (*Wipes eyes.*) To think I could have loved such a brute! (*Rising.*) I won't mind it: he isn't worth it. (*Going C.*) You have gone and taken this Lobelia, and thrown me up, have you? Very good, Mr. Tapscott; I'll be even with you.

SUSAN (*enters D. in F.*). 'E's 'ere, mem.

MRS. T. (*down C.*). Back again? (*Aside.*) He little suspects I know all.

SUSAN (*up C.*). Yes, mem. And he's got a big bouquet in a box. I see it through a hole in the cover.

MRS. T. (*aside*). For his Lobelia, no doubt; and covered up for fear I might see it. Ah! Mr. Tapscott, you'll find yourself in a nice box, but without any kind of hole in the cover to creep out through. (*Going L., aloud.*) Has he gone, yet?

SUSAN. Lor', no, mem. He's just be'ind on the stair.

MRS. T. (*aside*). He can't have repented, — it's nearly ten, — no, he's going to brazen it out. Very well; he'll meet with a different reception from what he anticipates. (*Turns back to door, and leans on mantle.*)

SUSAN. 'Ere 'e is, mem. (*Enter COPYWRIGHT bowing, exit SUSAN.*)

MRS. T. (*not looking at him*). Don't speak to me, sir. Don't utter a syllable. All is discovered.

COPYRIGHT (C.). Eh! (*Drops bouquet on table.*)

MRS. T. Yes, sir; discovered. I don't wonder you have nothing to say. I know all about Lobelia. You can hardly look in the indignant eye of an outraged wife, now, sir.

COPYRIGHT (*down c.*). Well, madam, I must confess I can't; at any rate, while you continue in that position. I—I can't imagine how I have offended—

MRS. T. (*aside*). Copyright! What an absurd error! (*To c.*)

COPYRIGHT. I assure you—I—

MRS. T. My dear Mr. Copyright, I beg your pardon. I wasn't aware that you—

COPYRIGHT. I beg you won't apologize.

MRS. T. I was—I was meditating a new story. Trying to enter into the feelings of an injured wife, you know. (*Goes R.*)

COPYRIGHT (L., *aside*). She certainly made a very forcible entry; sort of burglary, in fact. (*Aloud.*) Judging from the specimen, the story will be a decided success.

MRS. T. (*to c., indicating chair*). Pray sit down, Mr. Copyright. (*Both sit, COPYRIGHT L., she at table.*)

COPYRIGHT. Thank you, Mrs. Tapscott.

MRS. T. But how could you be so imprudent as to call so early as you did this morning? after my cautions too.

COPYRIGHT. Why! didn't you get my note?

MRS. T. To be sure: it was brought in at breakfast; but—I forgot all about it until now. (*Takes letter from table, and opens.*) What apology can I make? Pray excuse me. (*Reads.*)

COPYRIGHT. As you see, I came early to get the proof-sheets of your novel,—early, because we publish a week sooner than we intended, and every thing is hurried. I'm very sorry. I hope it won't inconvenience you. You spoke of an anniversary, I think.

MRS. T. (*rising, and dropping letter*). No, no! I did care once, but not now—not now. (*Goes R.*)

COPYRIGHT (*rising*). And I took the liberty of bringing a few flowers. (*Handing them.*)

MRS. T. (*crossing L. with them*). How good of you! Ah, no! I don't care now if my book never comes out.

COPYRIGHT (R., *aside*). Novelty of authorship wearing off. Often so. Reading proof usually settles 'em. (*Aloud.*) By the way, I met a sort of acquaintance in your street just now.

MRS. T. (*at mantle*). Indeed!

COPYRIGHT. Yes: he came up behind me as I went away from here.

MRS. T. (*aside*). My husband! (*Aloud.*) A sort of acquaintance: how do you mean?

COPYRIGHT. Why, you know, I live in Chilbury summers; and directly opposite me lives a very pretty and rather fast young widow.

MRS. T. (*aside*). Lobelia! (*Aloud.*) Well!

COPYRIGHT. Well, I've lately seen this gentleman going there at all times of the day, and— Why, Mrs. Tapscott, what is the matter? (*L. to her.*)

MRS. T. Nothing, nothing! I—(*sits L., aside*). Oh, the villain,—a widow!

COPYRIGHT. You are fatigued. I won't bore you any longer. Have you the proofs at hand?

MRS. T. Proofs! (*Rising.*) I should think I had. Oh, he shall pay for this! (*Goes R., COPYRIGHT C.*) (*Crash.*)

MR. T. (*outside*). Susan, if I fall over this coal-hod again, we part. Don't bandy words with me.

MRS. T. (R., *aside*). My husband back! (*Aloud.*) Come, sir, you must not be discovered here; this way, quick! (*To I E. L.*)

COPYRIGHT (*resists*). But I've done nothing to be ashamed of. I don't like this.

MRS. T. Get in, I beg you. (*Pushes him, I E. L.; aside.*) After what has happened, I wouldn't let my husband know of my connection with Copyright for the world. (*Crossing R.*) Here he comes. (*Exit I E. R.*)

MR. T. (*entering D. in F.*). Ha, she's gone! I'm not sorry, for I'm mad. Our front entry is about equal to a coal-mine in point of illumination; but when the resemblance is increased by leaving buckets of coal around, it is irritating—to the ankles. (*Rubs legs.*) Hang it! realism is not art. (*Down C.*) That fellow wasn't for me, after all: there was nobody on the corner but a smirking scoundrel whom I caught blowing kisses to somebody in the block, so I started to keep my appointment. But I'd hardly gone two

blocks when it occurred to me that I'd left that paper, so back I came; and now where is it? (*Looks about.*) She can't have had time to—(*sees it*)—no, here it is! (*Goes L. and picks it up.*) Now I feel safe. (*Rolling it up.*) She can't have been— No, no! she had no real suspicion. I suppose my reserved manner irritated her, for I was distant, yes, rather distant this morning; at least, I wished at one time I had been distant—about a mile. Poor thing! But no suspicion of the real truth—no, no!—she is too innocent herself. (*Going c.*) Why, what the devil is this? (*Taking flowers.*) I have a very vivid recollection of certain flowers of speech in our morning's conversation, but no natural ones. No, they were confoundedly unnatural, coming from wife to husband; and yet, here they are. Hallo, a letter! (*Drops bouquet.*) (*Opens and reads, going R.*) "My dear Cynthia." A man's handwriting! Now, I wasn't aware she was any one else's Cynthia but mine, and this is not my writing. Well, we live and learn. (*Reads.*) "I shall be with you earlier than usual, this morning." Than usual! Then he is in the habit of coming here! (*Reads.*) "Even at the risk of your husband's discovering our secret." Why, damme, it's a lover! (*Comes c., reads.*) "The surprise you intended for him will come a little earlier than we had planned." (*Grinding his teeth.*) Yes, indeed: you're right, my buck, the surprise will come a devilish deal earlier than either of you anticipated. (*Reads.*) "The reason I"—Oh, hang your reasons! (*Reads.*) "I must have all the proofs this morning, sure: so have them ready." He's afraid I might get 'em, is he? Oh, I've all the proofs I want! (*Reads.*) "As ever devoted to your interests.—Ed." Ed! not even Ned. Is it Edwin or Edward? Ed! there isn't even an Eddy to show in what direction the current flows. (*Going L.*) I see it now. It was fate brought me back here, and not the newspaper. I wish fate had told me to punch that blackguard's head that blew the kisses. He was the man, no doubt. Very good! Mrs. T., my eyes are open! Business may go to the devil now! Cadwallader will come the Marius among the ruins of his domestic Carthage. (*Sits by fire.*)

COPYWRIGHT (*entering stealthily* I E. L.). I don't hear any thing. It must have been a false alarm. (*Sees MR. T.*) Hallo! (*Aside.*) The very man I've seen going to the widow's.

MR. T. (*rising*). Hallo! (*Aside.*) The very ugly-looking scoundrel I met on the street just now. (*Goes R.*)

COPYWRIGHT (*aside*). Her husband, too! What a mess I've got them into! (*Aloud, going R.*) This is rather awkward, sir.

MR. T. I should say it was, sir, — devilish awkward for you. Who are you, sir?

COPYWRIGHT. I am — (*During following speeches MR. T. crowds COPYWRIGHT gradually to extreme L.*)

MR. T. And what the devil are you doing prowling about my house, sir? You are a sneak-thief, sir, and you look it.

COPYWRIGHT. My name is —

MR. T. Damn your name, sir! I dare say you have a hundred of them.

COPYWRIGHT. My name is Copy —

MR. T. And a devilish poor copy of an honest man, sir. Well, Mr. Copy?

COPYWRIGHT. Pardon me, sir, — *Wright*.

MR. T. I'm right, am I? Damme, he admits it. Oh, this is too much! Now, Mr. Copy —

COPYWRIGHT. *Wright*, if you please.

MR. T. (*loua*). Confound it, sir, I know I'm right! don't tell me that again.

COPYWRIGHT (*loud*). I will be heard, sir. My name is Copywright.

MR. T. Copywright, eh? Very well, sir, you are copy-right secured, then; for I've got you, and you won't get away in a hurry. Now, sir, what will you call your business? Don't hesitate: give it a name.

COPYWRIGHT. My business? (*Aside.*) I must preserve her secret. Luckily he don't seem to suspect.

MR. T. Oh! you hesitate, do you? Come, your business? Tell me any thing that comes handy, just to keep up appearances.

COPYWRIGHT (*aside*). What shall I say? (*Aloud.*) As I was saying when you interrupted me, I'm a —

MR. T. A what, then? out with it.

COPYWRIGHT. A lawyer, sir. My business —

MR. T. A lawyer, — humph! Wouldn't you like to be considered a clergyman, sir? I can believe you quite as easily. Or perhaps you'd like to identify yourself with the medical profession, sir. You will have all probabilities in your favor; for you don't look unlike a body-snatcher, sir.

COPYRIGHT. A body-snatcher, sir? Do you know —

MR. T. Don't bully me, sir. I don't doubt your familiarity with courts of law, but I suspect your point of observation has been the dock.

COPYRIGHT. The dock, sir? I am as well known at the bar as —

MR. T. (*well down L.*). I have no doubt of it, — every bar in the city. Hence your appearance in the dock, sir. Your nose tells the story.

COPYRIGHT (*well down L.*). My nose, sir? (*Aside.*) I won't stand his bullying any longer. (*Aloud.*) My nose, sir? Damme if I see any thing in your own nose so remarkably comely as to render your visits to Mrs. Bonds particularly acceptable.

MR. T. (*retreating*). 'Sh! I say, not so loud. (COPYRIGHT *gradually crowds MR. T. to extreme L., as above.*)

COPYRIGHT. Oho, sir! Who is the scoundrel now? how about body-snatchers! I am a resurrectionist, am I? Very good; I have brought about your day of judgment, at any rate.

MR. T. Not so loud; easy, now.

COPYRIGHT. I will be loud. You have taken tricks enough; now you play the knave, and I take you with my "last trump." Oh! I'm a resurrectionist.

MR. T. Consider my position. I —

COPYRIGHT. I object to your position. You have committed infringement on Copyright long enough: it is his turn now. Explain your visits to Mrs. Bonds.

MR. T. Don't make such a row. I assure you I went on business, — private business.

COPYRIGHT. Business, indeed, sir!

MR. T. A little investment in —

COPYRIGHT. In Bonds? This is no time for jesting. You are a heartless scoundrel, sir. What have you done? (*Melodramatic.*) Old Bonds, in whom I had the highest rate of interest, dies, and leaves Mrs. B., his young and helpless widow, alone, — a loan, thrown on the world without the least security against such pursuers of innocence as you, sir. The tempter comes, — you, the tempter, — though to my mind there is devilish little tempting about you, — and throws his nets over her little home.

MR. T. That's it, — her house. Don't you see?

COPYWRIGHT. I do see, and so shall you see — your villainy. (*Pathetically.*) Before your coming, I see her sitting in her peaceful front parlor, the Madonna of private life, dandling the innocent offspring of Bonds, deceased; her little coupons, so to speak, in whom all her interest lay. (*Tragic.*) But soon a little cloud appears on her domestic horizon, no bigger than a man's hand. (MR. T. *makes deprecatory gesture.*) And considerably smaller than the leg of mutton by whose impotent gesture you hope to stun the torrent of my virtuous indignation. A cloud appears. It is you. Small at first, because we see only your virtues, but soon enormous as the festering and swollen bulk of your vices crowds upon our perceptions.

MR. T. Dammé, this is unbearable!

COPYWRIGHT. It is, sir, and was. I saw the maternal instinct fade under the pestilential exhalation of your presence. I saw the maternal grasp relax, and the infants roll neglected to the floor. Unheeded alike were their piteous wails and the promptings of virtue. She fell —

MR. T. But she didn't though. She held out as if she'd been in the real-estate business all her life.

COPYWRIGHT. Real estate, sir! I blush for you. What is a piece of land to peace of mind? And what parallel can be drawn between a plot of ground and the plots you levelled against her? Be content with the ruin you have caused, and don't attempt to throw dirt on her reputation.

MR. T. It's all nonsense talking about ruin. I paid her a fair price, and —

COPYWRIGHT. Spare me, sir, — spare me the disgusting details.

MR. T. (*extreme R.*). If you will only let me explain —

COPYWRIGHT (*extreme R.*). Needless. I have already explained all — to your wife. I happen to stand in the most intimate and confidential relations to her — (*stops confused*).

MR. T. (*starting, aside*). Ed — found! (*Aloud.*) Well, sir, you hesitate. To my wife, yes — (*Crowds him up.*)

COPYWRIGHT (*to C.*). I — I was hasty. I meant —

MR. T. (*R.*). You didn't mean, rather (*with savage joy*). Ha, ha! found at last! A just Heaven has delivered thee into my hands. (*Produces letter.*) Look, scoundrel, look at this illiterate scrawl. It is yours. Don't deny it. Your

eyes are more truthful than their owner. Destroyer of my peace, explain! (*Advances.*)

COPYRIGHT (*going L., aside*). The secret cannot be kept longer. (*Aloud.*) Sir, my business will sufficiently explain that note.

MR. T. (C.). Your business, sir, — you are a lawyer.

COPYRIGHT (*aside, c.*). O Lord, that unlucky lie!

MR. T. Your being a lawyer will explain almost any villainy, but not this.

COPYRIGHT. When I said I was a lawyer, I —

MR. T. When you said you were a lawyer, I respected you as a man of ready invention, but did not believe you. Some lawyers have red noses, sir; some lawyers go prowling about other people's houses, sir: but no lawyer writes any such notes as this, sir, for he knows the consequences. And you shall know 'em devilish soon; you shall have an object-lesson directly (*rushes L., COPYRIGHT up c.*), — illustrated with cuts, sir, gratis (*up c., COPYRIGHT down R.*).

COPYRIGHT. Help! hallo, somebody! (*To L., Mr. T. to R.*)

MR. T. You spoke lightly of my hand just now; you shall have definite information as to its weight. (*COPYRIGHT starts up c.*) No, you don't. (*After him, both colliding with SUSAN, entering D. in F.*)

SUSAN. Murder! murder! (*Screams.*)

MR. T. Stop that noise, girl, and go away.

COPYRIGHT (*down L. hurriedly*). Call the police — do! He's mad.

MR. T. Craven, — would you? (*To L., COPYRIGHT R.*)

SUSAN (*crying, up c.*). Oh, oh! what shall I do? and the lady below!

MR. T. (L.). Lady! (*Stops.*)

SUSAN. Well, she don't look it, sir. Mrs. —

MR. T. (*anxiously*). Yes, yes, what?

SUSAN. Mrs. — something they gives you when they owes you something.

MR. T. That's a cow-hiding, scoundrel. (*To R.; COPYRIGHT dodges L.*)

SUSAN. Mrs. Bonds, sir: that's it.

MR. T. (R., *staggers*). Bonds! O Lord, where is she?

COPYRIGHT (L., *aside*). This is fairly providential.

SUSAN. She's below stairs, sir.

MR. T. (*up C., quick*). I must get her away. But you won't escape me (*shaking fist*): I'll lock you in, sir. (*Exit, pushing SUSAN before him, and locking door.*)

COPYRIGHT. Now here's a nice fix. Locked in to await the pleasure of a madman who wants to cut your throat for nothing, and give you the change! Change! It's the change I object to; for, without being at all vain, I am satisfied with myself as I am, and won't have any alterations if I can help it. But how to escape! (*Runs to window R.*) O Lord! thirty feet clear, and the choice of a spiked railing or a water-butt at the bottom! It would be the end of me in either case. No, I don't believe in jumping at one's conclusion. Ha! why not follow Mrs. Tapscott? (*Runs to I E. R., and meets MRS. T., who enters.*) Hush,—he has discovered all.

MRS. T. (*going C.*). He? Who?

COPYRIGHT. That madman.

MRS. T. You mean my husband. Well, we could hardly hope to keep it from him much longer.

COPYRIGHT. But that is not all. He has improved upon our little plot, by introducing a villain of his own invention.

MRS. T. That is, he has entered into it himself.

COPYRIGHT. With a vengeance. Literally, with a vengeance. He has found my letter, and takes me for a lover.

MRS. T. A lover!

COPYRIGHT. And he has so far identified me with the character, that he proposes embellishing the plot with a murder. Real blood, ma'am. He wants to cut my throat.

MRS. T. (*going L.*). What a situation!

COPYRIGHT (*to C.*). That's it: I'm not up to the situation. I wish I had never been cast in the piece at all. You must save me.

MRS. T. But you don't mean to—

COPYRIGHT. To have my throat cut? No, ma'am. Quick, hide me! he'll be back directly. (*MRS. T. up C.*) No, no, not that way: he has locked the door. (*Goes L.*)

MRS. T. (*down C.*). But this can easily be explained.

COPYRIGHT. Suppose you try: I didn't have much success. But here he comes: where shall I go? (*Runs about.*)

MRS. T. (*to L.*). In there (*I E. L.*), and don't come till I call.

COPYRIGHT (*aside*). She needn't caution me. I expect he'll murder us both. (*Exit E. 1 L.*)

MR. T. (*entering D. in F.*). Now, scoundrel, I'm ready for you. (*Sees MRS. T.*) Oh, ho, ma'am, where is he? What have you done with him? (*Down C.*)

MRS. T. (L.). He is safe. Will you listen to reason?

MR. T. If you mean listen to you, which is quite a different thing, I won't. He's there, I know. Let me get at him.

MRS. T. Never, sir, until you have heard the truth.

MR. T. Have you the face to defend your lover, woman?

MRS. T. Mr. Tapscott, you are making a fool of yourself.

MR. T. Not a bit. It is your Copyright who has been making a fool of me.

MRS. T. One fool, Mr. T? He must be a bungling workman, for there is material enough in you for half a dozen. Give me five minutes' attention, and you will agree with me. You have found a letter addressed to me. (*Little C.*)

MR. T. I should think so. To Mrs. Tapscott, present; Mr. Tapscott absent being understood. Oh! I know you.

MRS. T. That letter concerns a little surprise I had planned for the anniversary of our wedding.

MR. T. Pooh, pooh! (*Goes R.*)

MRS. T. (*to C.*). I had planned to make my first appearance as an authoress, with the assistance of Mr. Copyright, in the pages of "The Milky Way." This was the surprise, this the business that brought him so often to the house.

MR. T. Ingenious, very. But your publisher addresses you as his dear Cynthia: how will you explain that?

MRS. T. Very easily. "Cynthia" is the *nom-de-plume* under which I appear. I dare say Mr. Copyright hasn't the least idea that it isn't assumed.

MR. T. If your writing is fictional, Mrs. Tapscott, I'll guarantee its success. Pile it on. Ed is his — his what d'ye call it, I presume.

MRS. T. Any ordinarily intelligent man would have at once recognized "Ed." as the abbreviation of editor. For Mr. Copyright has that relation to the magazine.

MR. T. Go it, go it! But I tremble for your future. (*Aside.*) There's fitness in that though: not being more than

half a man, he only signs half a name. (*Aloud, triumph.*) But the proofs! (*To C.*)

MRS. T. (*taking them from desk up R.*). Are here.

MR. T. (*looking it over*). A story, — a trashy novel. Mrs. Tapscott, I ask you for facts, and you give me fiction. Is this right? These are no proofs.

MRS. T. But they are. (*Down L.*) The corrected proofs of my novel.

MR. T. (*embarrassed*). Yes — to be sure — ahem! this is plausible. (*Aside, putting manuscript on table.*) I'm afraid I may have been rather hasty.

MRS. T. Well, sir, are you satisfied?

MR. T. Well, I may — I say I may — have been deceived in this. But soft, one thing more: perhaps you can explain his blowing kisses to you.

MRS. T. Well, there is no great harm in a kiss, I am sure; and when it's blown, whatever warmth and vigor it once possessed must be pretty well gone.

MR. T. Mrs. Tapscott, when I married you I swore to love and to cherish. I gave bonds to —

MRS. T. Bonds indeed, sir! It is for you to explain, now, your visits to the young and fast — yes fast — widow at Chisbury. Your Lobelia, sir. (*Going R.*) How could I have so far forgotten myself as to make explanations to such a monster!

MR. T. (*aside*). She has read the Personal.

MRS. T. (*going L.*). My only course is a divorce. Thank Heaven! I am not friendless! (*Calls I E. L.*) Come in, Mr. Copywright.

COPYWRIGHT (*entering I E. L. timidly*). Is he rational yet?

MRS. T. (*taking his arm*). He won't murder any one now. His fangs are drawn.

MR. T. You have completely misunderstood that cursed Personal, my dear. It was merely an answer to my offer to the widow for —

MRS. T. I know, sir.

MR. T. She has lived extravagantly —

MRS. T. I know, sir.

MR. T. Was hard up, you see.

COPYWRIGHT (*aside*). That is evident enough.

MRS. T. I know that very well, sir.

MR. T. (*going R.*). Hang it, Cynthia! the moon is made of

green cheese, do you know that? If you know every thing, how the deuce am I to explain?

MRS. T. You can't, sir: explanation will be thrown away.

COPYWRIGHT. Yes, sir, thrown away. I have told her all.

MR. T. And a great deal more. Have you told her that Lobelia Cottage has been —

MRS. T. (*dropping COPYWRIGHT'S arm*). Lobelia Cottage!

COPYWRIGHT. Yes, that is the rather fanciful name of Mrs. Bonds' residence.

MRS. T. (*going C.*). Well, go on.

MR. T. Has been advertised for sale for some time, in consequence of Mrs. Bonds' marriage and immediate departure for Europe?

COPYWRIGHT. I didn't know — I —

MR. T. You are a meddlesome old ass, sir! Here is the whole story: Mrs. Bonds, who is to be married in a week, decided to sell her present residence in Chilbury. Knowing your desire for a seaside residence, I made offers. They were accepted, and the business was to have been settled to-day —

MRS. T. Well?

MR. T. But this well-meaning old fossil has ruined all. Five minutes ago I told her it was all off.

MRS. T. And she's gone!

MR. T. Yes, unfortunately, back to Chilbury.

COPYWRIGHT (*going up C.*). I'll do what I can to atone for my mistake. I'll bring her back.

MRS. T. (*a little L.*). If you are unsuccessful, I'll never forgive you! (*Exit COPYWRIGHT D. in F.*)

(*Pause.*)

MRS. T. I'm so ashamed of myself, Caddy! It was all that Personal.

MR. T. (*to R. C.*). I was a fool to have tried such a silly means of getting an answer, but I feared a letter might fall into your hands.

MRS. T. Why, Caddy, weren't you going to tell me?

MR. T. On the anniversary of our wedding, dear. Can you forgive me, Cynthia?

MRS. T. (*to him*). With all my heart.

MR. T. (*kissing her*). But no more blowing kisses.

MRS. T. (*looking at house, and drawing away from it*).

Don't, Caddy, before so many people. It is horribly bad taste. People don't like these family scenes. (*To house, timidly.*) You don't, do you? No. Then will you excuse us if we draw the curtain on our reconciliation? Please do. I hope I have some friends here — yes — then you really must. I make it

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